

ENVIRONMENTAL

1947: Los Angeles Air Pollution Control District founded; nation's first air pollution control agency. 1954: Heavy smog shuts down industry and schools in Los Angeles for most of October. 1959: California becomes first state to regulate auto emissions; requires "blow-by" valve on new car engines to recycle crankcase gases. Cost per car: \$7. 1962: Rachel Carson's bestselling book *Silent Spring* published; documents widespread environmental harm resulting from use of toxic pesticides and herbicides. 1965: "Save San Francisco Bay" movement wins passage of state law creating Bay Conservation and Development Commission to regulate Shoreline development and limit fill projects. 1969: Offshore oil drilling causes Santa Barbara Channel oil "blowout"; fouls birds, beaches with millions of gallons of oil. Los Angeles records worst smog season: 137 lung-searing smog alert days. 1970: First Earth Day: April 22. Congress passes Clean Air Act. President Richard Nixon creates EPA. Pacific Southwest EPA region established; includes California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Pacific Islands. 1971: Congress restricts lead-based paint in homes; bans lead paint on cribs and toys. EPA begins issuing sewage treatment construction grants totalling \$6 billion in Pacific Southwest by 1989; helps local governments reach secondary treatment goal set by 1972 Clean Water Act. 1972: Congress passes Clean Water Act; protects wetlands, gives EPA authority set water quality standards, penalizes polluters. EPA bans DDT. California voters pass Coastal Conservation Initiative, limiting coastal development. 1973: Congress passes Endangered Species Act. EPA begins enforcement against eight Arizona/Nevada copper smelters emitting two million tons of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) annually. Ultimately, SO₂ pollution is reduced by 94%. 1974: Southern California scientists publish evidence that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) destroy earth's protective stratospheric ozone layer. 1975: EPA requires new cars to have catalytic converters and use unleaded gas. Lead levels in urban air drop 99% over next 20 years. 1976: Congress passes hazardous waste law which mandates phase-out of toxic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). 1977: Congress strengthens Clean Air Act. 1978: EPA, other agencies ban CFCs as propellants in aerosol cans. Toxic waste at Love Canal, N. Y., makes national headlines. 1979: Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. EPA bans sale of Agent Orange herbicide. 1980: President Carter signs Superfund law; requires EPA to list priority toxic sites and compel polluters to pay for cleanup; authorizes EPA to take emergency response role. 1981: Superfund Program cleans up first half of 17,000 drums of hazardous waste abandoned at General Disposal site, Santa Fe Springs, CA, uses Superfund law to get responsible party to finish the job. 1982: Groundwater pollution from semiconductor factory in San Jose, CA found in drinking water well 1,800 feet away; similar problems in 20-mile radius make Silicon Valley the nation's largest concentration of Superfund sites. 1983: EPA investigates groundwater contamination from aerospace industry in San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys, CA; adds sites to Superfund list. 1984: Accident at Union Carbide chemical plant in Bhopal, India releases methyl isocyanate, killing over 2,000 people. Congress passes tougher law regulating hazardous waste disposal. 1985: Union Carbide plant at Institute, West Virginia releases methyl isocyanate; Congress debates potential for Bhopal-like accident in U.S. 1986: Congress passes law requiring chemical facilities to annually report toxic releases and inventories. Chernobyl nuclear reactor in Ukraine explodes in world's worst nuclear accident. 1987: 24 nations agree to phase out most of world's CFC production. Department of Energy picks Yucca Mountain, NV for permanent nuclear waste disposal site. 1988: Shell Oil refinery at Martinez, CA spills 365,000 gallons of oil in Carquinez Strait. Penalty funds used to buy 10,000 acres of bayside salt ponds for largest salt marsh restoration on West Coast. 1989: Exxon Valdez spills 11 million gallons of crude oil into Alaska's Prince William Sound; worst oil spill in U. S. history. EPA completes 18-year grant program providing \$6 billion to local governments for sewage treatment upgrades in Pacific Southwest alone. 1990: EPA orders two canneries in American Samoa to stop polluting Pago Pago Harbor with fish canning waste. Canneries comply; harbor gets visibly cleaner. Congress further strengthens Clean Air Act to address acid rain, air toxics, stratospheric ozone; passes law giving EPA lead role among federal agencies in environmental education. 1991: Train derailment spills toxic metam sodium into Sacramento River near Dunsmuir, CA, killing all aquatic life in 40 miles of river above Shasta Lake. EPA Superfund Emergency Response Program cooperates with other agencies to create "air curtain" in riverbed to dissipate the chemical before it pollutes the Lake. In Washington, D.C., grassroots groups hold national environmental justice summit. EPA wins \$86 million settlement from Hughes Aircraft to clean up contaminated groundwater at Tucson Airport. 1992: 178 nations take part in U. N. Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. EPA takes charge of abandoned Casmalia hazardous waste disposal site near Santa Maria, CA; pursues responsible parties to pay for long-term remediation. EPA wins \$8 million settlement from Chevron for polluting Santa Barbara Channel with oil and grease from offshore drilling. 1993: EPA reports that secondhand smoke is a serious risk to non-smokers. EPA begins major groundwater cleanup in the San Fernando Valley, funded by responsible parties. 1994: President Clinton orders government agencies to make environmental justice part of their mission. EPA launches Brownfields Initiative to clean up, redevelop abandoned inner-city properties. EPA signs Bay-Delta Accord, begins process to resolve San Francisco Bay-Delta water issues. 1995: Bald Eagle upgraded from "endangered" to less-critical "threatened" listing, reflecting birds' recovery since 1972 DDT ban. EPA requires incinerators to reduce toxic emissions by 90%. 1996: Congress passes new Safe Drinking Water Act and Food Quality Protection Act, which includes pesticide limits designed to protect children. EPA wins \$280 million from 4,000+ responsible parties for toxic cleanup at Operating Industries Inc. landfill Monterey Park, CA EPA organizes Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission to investigate air pollution's impact on canyon. 1997: EPA brokers \$80 million deal to save Bolsa Chica, Southern California's largest remaining tidal marsh. EPA Administrator Carol Browner forms Office of Children's Health Protection. 1998: EPA announces Clean Water Action Plan. Underground fuel tank owners face deadline to upgrade tanks to prevent leaks. Superfund Emergency Response Program reports 420 emergency cleanups completed since 1981 at sites posing an imminent threat to human health or the environment. 1999: Toxic releases in Pacific Southwest are down 75% from a decade earlier, according to EPA's Toxic Release Inventory. Superfund's 650th construction completion, at MEW site in Mountain View, CA, marks halfway point for cleanup of nation's roughly 1,300 Superfund sites.

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